



OFFICE OF THE CHAIR
JOE A. MARTINEZ, CHAIRMAN
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
DISTRICT 11

Memorandum

To: George Burgess, County Manager

From: Joe A. Martinez, Chairman



Date: August 11, 2006

Re: Heightened Security Alert/Miami International Airport - Update

This afternoon, my office participated on a conference call with Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Officials and local and state elected and law enforcement officials. DHS informed participants that British law enforcement officials had now arrested 24 individuals in relation to the plot by terrorist who were targeting U.S. bound flights. While DHS response to this event and local response has been excellent and as previously planned, DHS also emphasized that the threat is still ongoing. Therefore, local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies need to continue their vigilance until officials can sift through all corresponding intelligence and security levels revisited.

For the near future, all domestic and international flights are under an "orange" alert and will likely continue to be at this level for several more days. DHS did indicate that red threat level for all flights from Great Britain will likely be reassessed tomorrow, but it is still yet undetermined whether during the reassessment that the threat level will be lowered. Therefore, the mandatory gate inspection for all flights to London will continue, and random gate searches on all other flights will be imposed, placing a further strain on Transportation Safety Administration (TSA) and government resources. TSA is currently trying to improve the wait times by trying to rework the banned items lists – small tubes of lipstick are now allowed on flights, which is a change from yesterday morning and TSA officials indicated that they will be working through the weekend to better adapt to this new threat. With regards to the use of National Guard at the airports, a decision to deploy the National Guard would allow screeners to focus on their core mission. While this decision is made by the Governor, I have communicated my concerns to him and am awaiting his decision – one that could defray some of the financial and manpower burdens to the County.

DHS Assistant Secretary Tracy Henke for Grants and Training reiterated that their current position regarding federal funding for the "red" and "orange" alert is that states and local governments will have the flexibility to use up to 25 percent of prior year and FY06 Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) funding and Law Enforcement Terrorism and Prevention Program funds.

DHS has not discussed any additional reimbursement or grant opportunities to cover the added costs, but depending on the time period of the heightened alert, DHS could explore other options in the future. Assistant Secretary Henke suggested looking at other departments' programs, such as the Department of Justice (DOJ) Justice Assistant Grant program. Furthermore, my office has discussed this issue with the EOP/White House at length throughout the last two days and they will be exploring options that might prove beneficial for Miami Dade County. To this end, I will be discussing this issue further with them and have assigned Eric Olafson of the BCC OIA office to follow up directly with them in order to have as much information as possible and ample time to act.

Thus, I would like for you to explore the use of Justice Assistance Grants from DOJ in addition to the use of UASI funding and/or Law Enforcement and Terrorism Prevention funds. This could again provide some financial relief to our ongoing efforts to keep the flying public and workers at MIA safe and to ensure the continued flow of traffic at the largest economic engine in Miami-Dade County. As I stated yesterday, BCC OIA has been instructed to continue pursuing other state and federal funding sources that could provide relief as heightened alert continues into next week. In closing, I have also asked the BCC OIA office to work closely with our state and federal delegations and assure that they are briefed on the situation as it pertains to Miami Dade County and our financial needs as a result of the heightened security.

If you should have any questions please contact my Chief of Staff, Javier I. Marques at (305) 375-5511.

JM/jim

Cc: Honorable Mayor Carlos Alvarez
Honorable Vice-Chairman Dennis C. Moss and
Members of the Board of County Commissioners
Murray Greenberg, County Attorney
Susie Torriente, Assistant County Manager
Alina Tejeda Hudak, Assistant County Manager
Herminio Lorenzo, Director, Miami Dade Fire and Rescue Department
and Office of Emergency Management (OEM)
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